

For Immediate Release
April 22, 2011

COCHITI PUEBLO MAN PLEADS GUILTY
TO FEDERAL MURDER CHARGE

Defendant Admits Killing his 95-Year Old Grandmother

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning, **Brian Joseph Chavez**, 38, an enrolled member of the Pueblo of Cochiti, entered a guilty plea to a second degree murder charge. The plea was entered in Albuquerque federal court under a plea agreement with the United States Attorney's Office. Under the terms of the plea agreement, Chavez will be sentenced to a 25-year term of imprisonment. Chavez has been in federal custody since his arrest on June 22, 2009 and remains detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Chavez pleaded guilty to murdering his 95-year-old grandmother, Jane Louise Chavez, on June 19, 2009 in the home shared by Ms. Chavez and Chavez in the Pueblo of Cochiti. Chavez initially was charged in a criminal complaint on June 22, 2009, and was indicted on a first degree murder charge on July 7, 2009. Today, Chavez entered a guilty plea to an information charging him with second degree murder. Under the terms of the plea agreement, the first degree murder charge will be dismissed after Chavez is sentenced.

According to the criminal complaint, an investigation by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal Bureau of Investigation revealed that, on June 19, 2009, Francisco Chavez, the son of Ms. Chavez and the father of Chavez, went to his mother's home at approximately 11:30 a.m. for his daily visit. Because Francisco Chavez had lost his hearing, his son typically communicated with him by written notes. When Francisco Chavez arrived at his mother's home, Chavez handed his father a series of written notes explaining that he had killed his

grandmother at her request and in order to end her suffering. After Francisco Chavez returned to his own home in an agitated state, other family members went to Ms. Chavez's home and found her dead body on the couch. Chavez explained to them that he shot his grandmother to relieve her suffering. When emergency medical responders got to Ms. Chavez's home at 1:20 p.m. that day, they determined that she had no heartbeat, was cold to touch, lividity was apparent, and her limbs were stiff. Chavez told an emergency medical responder that his grandmother had been dead since 6:30 that morning. Later that day, Chavez made a detailed statement to agents describing how and why he shot his grandmother "four or five times in the chest." An autopsy confirmed that Ms. Chavez died from gunshot wounds to the chest.

In his plea agreement, Chavez admitted the facts set forth in the criminal complaint.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Offices of Justice Services, Northern Pueblos Agency, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Presiliano Torrez.

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